

**Testimony to the Legislative Appropriations Committee regarding Charter School Funding delivered by Common Ground High School student Michael Bruno on February 16, 2010**

To Honorable Chair Toni Harp and the Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Common Ground is one of the best schools in Connecticut. We are the only high school that came off of the No Child Left Behind Schools in Need of Improvement list in the last two years. We are also the only charter school in Connecticut that focuses on both developing environmental understanding and taking real actions to make the environment better. Common Ground practices tolerance—it is a safe haven where all kids are accepted and none are rejected.

In order to keep these great points going and to achieve at even higher levels, Common Ground and other charters like Common Ground deserve fair funding treatment. All the funding that is given to us is greatly appreciated and put to good use. More than 90% of Common Ground seniors graduate and go to college, which shows how state funding directly benefits our students. Common Ground students get many one to one opportunities with their teachers, who put in many hours. Class sizes are reasonable at the moment. Common Ground offers great opportunities that help us educationally such as after hours homework center, academic enrichment and academic support programs.

Public school funding is at an all time high in Connecticut, but charter schools in New Haven are still seriously underfunded compared to their public school counterparts. It feels to me like we are not being given the chance and opportunities that better funding brings to other public schools. It is very upsetting to have to make ourselves visible and plead every year for funding while schools such as Wilbur Cross and James Hillhouse don't. Charter schools are just as important as other public schools, and we should be funded fairly.

Thank you for your time and attention.